



'Nashville' is a smash

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We've seen it before — the devious, young up-and-comer who is determined to punch out the old star's lights.

Bette Davis rose into the stratosphere after she played the fading star to Anne Baxter's young'un in "All About Eve," (Bette was all of 40 when she made the movie).

Barbra Streisand did it with a man — Kris Kristofferson in "A Star Is Born," which was a remake of a remake starring Judy Garland. Now Tom Cruise and Beyoncé are working on yet another remake.

And although it was panned, Gwyneth Paltrow and Leighton Meester picked that tune in 2010's "Country Strong."

Now comes the latest incarnation, ABC's new series, "**Nashville**," about, yes, the older country-music star and the up-and-comer.

Considering that Paltrow's country music excursion was a pretty much a bust, why would ABC consider trotting out the old busted up *geetar* and playing that song one more time?

The reason is clear within the first five minutes of "Nashville."

And for once it's not just the great casting of Connie Britton and Hayden Panettiere. It's all about the writing.

Even terrific actors can't make dopey dialogue fly, and "Nashville" is arguably the best-written new TV series of the fall season.

Because I write for a living, I tend to watch TV with my ears. If it's badly written, I'm badly offended.

Although lots of New Yorkers tend to think of country music as the epitome of music for idiots, I figure that anyone who believes that is the real idiot.

Having grown up with country music — my mom was raised on a ranch in Colorado — I love a good twang.

And “Nashville” is good twang on all counts — writing, acting and original music sung, yes, by the actors.

Britton plays Nashville’s reigning star, Rayna James, who is about to have her rhinestones shot off by Panettiere’s bratty newcomer, Juliette Barnes.

Juliette is a crossover country star with a bad attitude, a way with men, a junkie mother and an cinematic drive to run over everyone in her way.

Rayna’s hits built the record label she’s been with since the beginning — but now her new album is tanking. Suddenly, the suits expect her to be the opening act for the suddenly chart-topping Juliette on a double-bill tour.

Not going to happen.

Working for (and against) Rayna is her ruthless, power-broker father (Powers Boothe) who wants Rayna’s once-successful house husband Teddy (Eric Close) to give up the dishes and run for mayor.

This show is everything that the horribly written “**Smash**” could have been.

Kudos to both Callie Khouri (“Thelma and Louise”) for creating these characters and Khouri’s husband, music producer T Bone Burnett, for the music — especially the gorgeous tune from the the first episode, “If I Didn’t Know Better.”

And really, I should know better but . . . I’m going to predict a big future for this up-and-comer.

The show, I mean.

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